1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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The population of Gozo differs from that of Malta, having a higher proportion of people over 65 and a much smaller proportion in the 15-64 group (Fig. 48). Variations between the proportions in the main age groups are shown in Fig. 49, but few evolutionary trends are recognisable. There was a decline in the percentage of young children from 1891 down to 1931, but this was offset, particularly in Malta, by the post-war period when birth rates were high. In Gozo, the return of people to the Island from Malta and from abroad was reflected, in the 1931 Census, in a particularly high proportion in the 15-64 group, in contrast to the normal state of affairs. 162

The analysis of age structure by sex (Fig. 50) shows a consistently higher proportion of females than of males in the working age groups (15-64). That these figures are bound up with emigration is further corroborated by the more even balance between the sexes in the over 65 group.

In terms of actual numbers, children under 15 increased from 44,000 in 1861 to 106,600 in 1948 while the numbers of working age have grown from 80,700 to 182,600 and of old people from 8,200 to 16,800. The greatest relative increase has therefore been among the children but in their case there have been two distinct periods of numerical growth. Between 1861 and 1881, the group showed an absolute increase of only 4 per cent. In the next 30 years there was an increase of 57 per cent. This was checked in the period 1911-21, but followed by a further rapid increase between 1921 and 1948 when the number of children grew by 62 per cent. Throughout the whole period, the sex ratio remained fairly constant between 102 and 104 males per 100 females. The reasons for such fluctuations are best deferred to a later consideration of fertility rates.

Among the working age group, the rise in the number of women has been at a steadily accelerating rate, whereas that of the men fell sharply in 1921. The numbers over 65 declined in 1871 and 1901, but rose steadily at all other Census dates. Masculinity was least in 1921 (89) and highest in 1901 and 1911 (98). Among old people, the ratio of males to 100 females varied between 98 and 88 but showed no progressive trend.

The most recent developments in the evolution of the population are summarised by a comparison of the 1948 and 1956 age pyramids (Fig. 51). The large number of children who, in 1948, were less than five years old, had by 1956 been absorbed in the 5-15 age groups, but the proportion of under-five's in 1956 was well below that in 1948. The other most striking feature is the very small proportions of the 15-45 age groups in 1956, indicating the wastage, most marked among males, which is a product of emigration.

FAMILY SIZE

The Census of 1948 is the first from which a precise calculation of family size can be made. Previous estimates were generally to the effect that 'the average family is of four of five children'. Information from the Family Census of June 1955 (21) has not yet become available. 163

In Malta, more than half the married women have borne four or more children and in Gozo nearly two-thirds. An extraordinarily high proportion, 13.5 per cent. in Malta and 16.4 per cent. in Gozo, have ten or more. Such figures do not, however, represent the total number of births which may take place, and Table 29 shows the number of women by cohorts of completed fertility who have had various numbers of children.

Table 29.

Number of children	Great Britain 1946	Maltese Islands 1948	
	a	b	c
None	10.3	17.2	11.3
1-3	48.2	63.6	17.8
4-9	37.6	18.6	45.0
10 and over	3.7	0.6	25.9
	100%	100%	100%

a = women married between 1900 and 1909 - R.C. on Pop. 1949-50, Vol. 2.
b = women married in 1935 - R.C. on Pop. 1949-50, Vol. 2.
c = married women over 45 years of age - Census of 1948.

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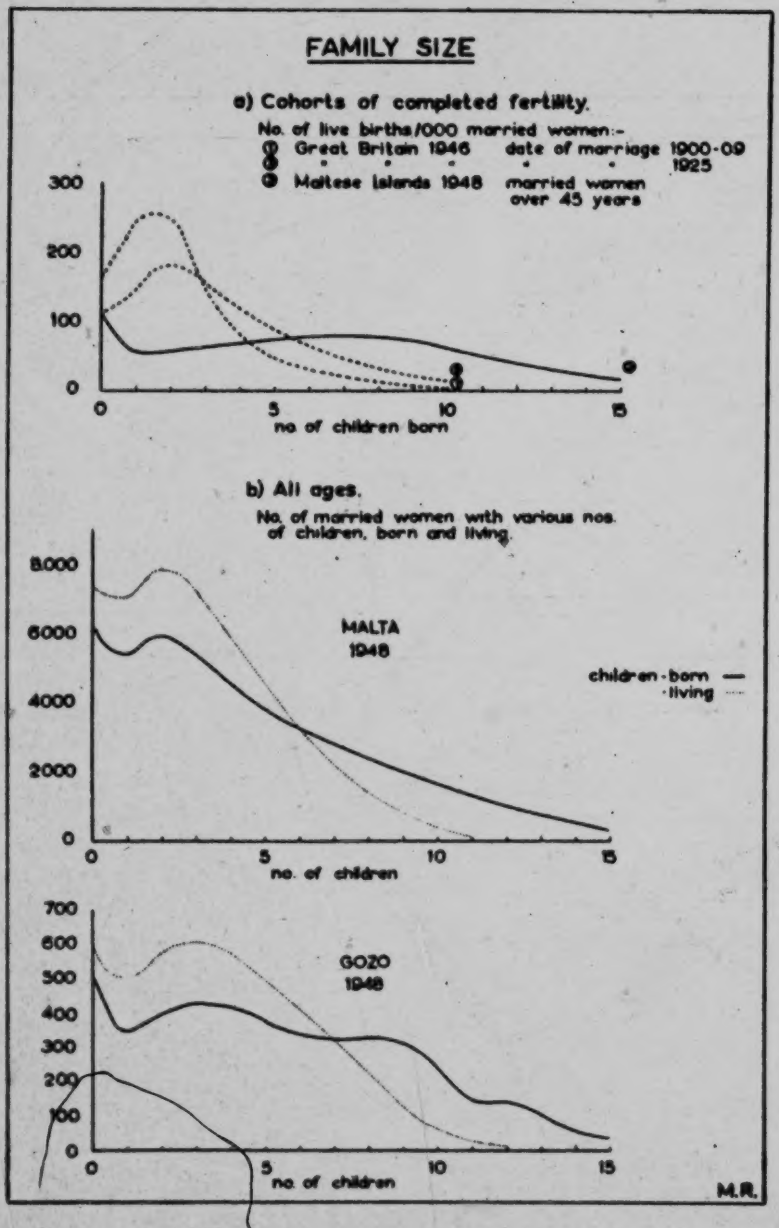

Fig. 52 Family Size.

[p.150-A]

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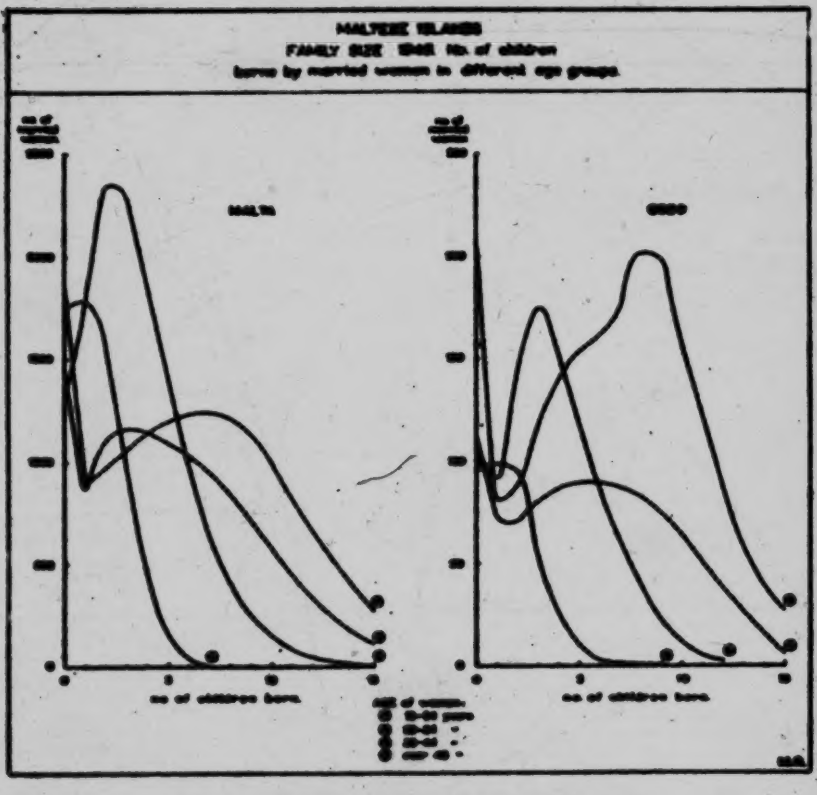

Fig. 83 Maltese Islands: Family Size, 1948.

[p. 150-8]

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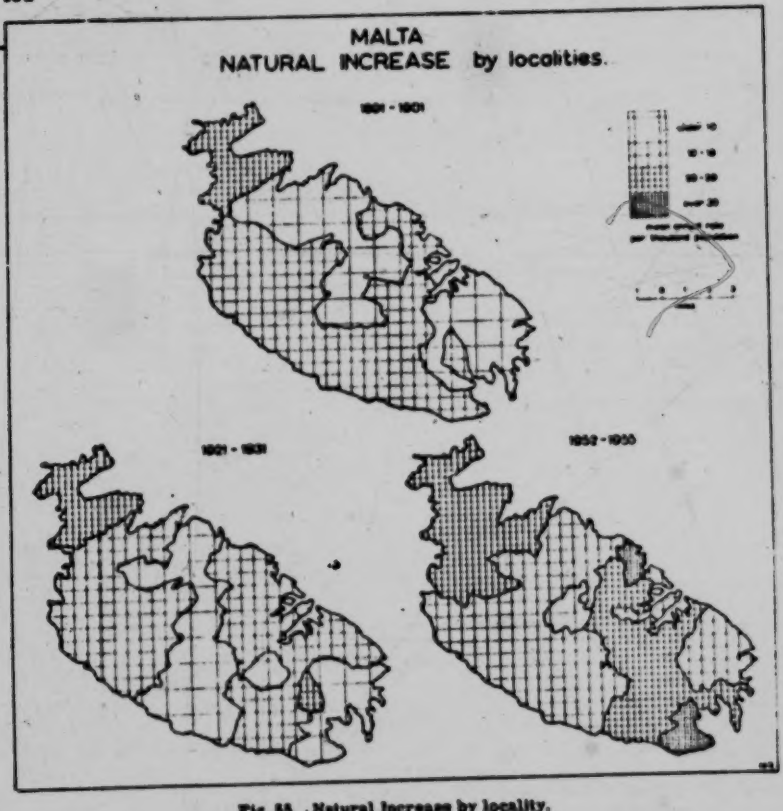

Fig. 55 · Natural increase by locality.

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BIRTHS

The crude birth rate in the Islands has remained between 30 and 40 per thousand over almost the entire period since 1826. Only in the 1840's did it exceed 40 and since then it has remained well below that figure. In 1917 and again in the Second World War it fell below 30, but a permanent downward trend has only been established during the last decade, bringing the birth rate below 30 since 1952 (Fig. 54).

The overall trend has thus been one of decline. This began after the peak of the 1840's and continued until the 70's. There was a reversion to higher rates during the last two decades of the nineteenth century which was carried on until 1906, but the next four years brought unemployment and depression, foreshadowing the trough of the 1914-18 War. This was followed by a recovery to 38 per thousand, but the rate soon fell again to remain around 33 until the Second World War. A marked decline in the period 1940-43 was followed by a rise in 1944 to levels above anything experienced since the 1850's and these were maintained until 1948. Since then, decline has been rapid and sustained. With the sole

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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exception of 1942, there has been no recorded instance of a birth rate as low as 26.5, which was the figure for 1958. 163

In the late nineteenth century, Maltese birth rates were comparable with those of southern Europe, but subsequent decline has been much delayed in Malta. Economic progress in the Islands during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was accompanied by a rising rather than by a falling birth rate. The pattern of natality in Malta since 1911, however, conforms to trends experienced elsewhere in Europe, although the rates themselves have not been the same. The decline in the Maltese birth rate during the 1914-18 War was less marked than on the European mainland and there was an actual increase in Malta between 1919 and 1939, when other European rates declined. The post-war upsurge in births reached its peak early in Malta and while the birth rates of most European countries have been stable at a medium level over the last few years, that of Malta has been falling from the most recent peak. 163 171

DEATHS

The decline in mortality during the past few years has been even greater than that in births. Before the Second World War, the Maltese death rate had fallen below 20 on but three occasions and in 11 separate years it had exceeded 30. Since 1953 it has stayed consistently below 10, thus becoming directly comparable with the death rates of the most advanced Western European countries. 165 [171]

In the nineteenth century, the Maltese death rate was subject to violent annual fluctuations. The worst years were those of epidemic cholera, but even in the latter part of the century, when this was less common, the rate remained high. The main factors responsible were poverty, disease and unsanitary living conditions which were particularly reflected in high infant mortality. Improvements in drainage, sewerage and water supply were effective in reducing mortality from nearly 27/1,000 in the 1890's to 21 in the 1930's but much greater reductions were achieved once the problem of infant mortality was attacked. As recently as the 1920's, this was still as high as 250 per 1,000 live births and only in 1936 did it fall below 200. The decline in this rate was further delayed by the Second World War but by 1944 it had fallen to 114. Since then, progress has been rapid, and infant mortality in 1958 stood at 40 per 1,000 live births, a level comparable with those of many European countries.

Thus, in Malta, as in other European countries, the death rate has been reduced largely as a result of declining infant mortality and the reduction although late has been extremely rapid. A further decline is both possible and, on humanitarian grounds, desirable.

NATURAL INCREASE

Statistics of births, deaths, marriages and natural increase are illustrated in Figs. 54 and 55. In the years since 1948, the natural increase has reached its highest level because of a remarkable decline in the death rate. The absolute natural increase in the decade 1831-40 was 3,241 whereas in 1941-50, despite the low birth rate of the war years, the excess of births over deaths was 52,833. The current natural increase runs at about 5,000 a year, ten times that of a century ago. 161

The annual rate of natural increase in 1831-40 was less than 5 per 1,000; by the end of the century it had reached 10 and in 1941-50 it was 18, since when it has maintained the present rate of 19. The general upward trend has not been an even one as the graph shows, there being peaks in 1851-60, 1881-90, 1901-10 and 1941-50, of which the first and last were the highest. The former was a period of high birth rates, a moderate death rate and very early marriage; the latter was one of rapidly falling death rates and a post-war upsurge in births. The troughs in the curve were lowest in the early and mid-nineteenth centuries, corresponding to times of frequent sickness and epidemic, of which the late 1860's and early 1870's provide examples.

Annual fluctuations in natural increase reflect specific historical events. On six occasions, the number of deaths in a year has exceeded the number of births. In 1837, '47, '50 and '65, epidemic cholera was the cause. In 1874, a

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1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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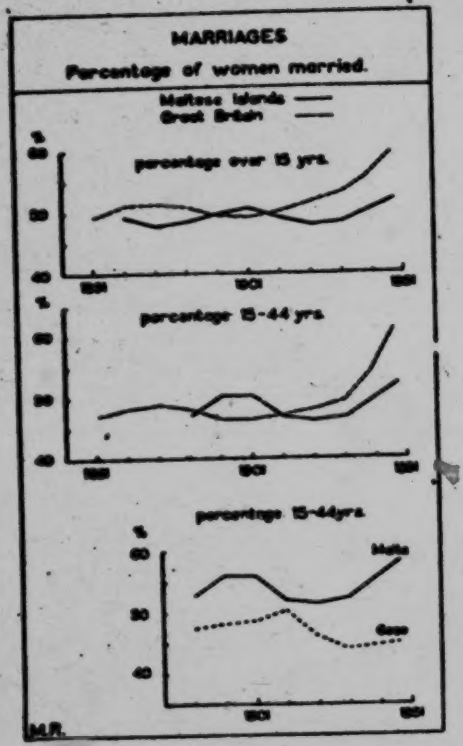

Fig. 56 Marriages: Percentage of Women Married.

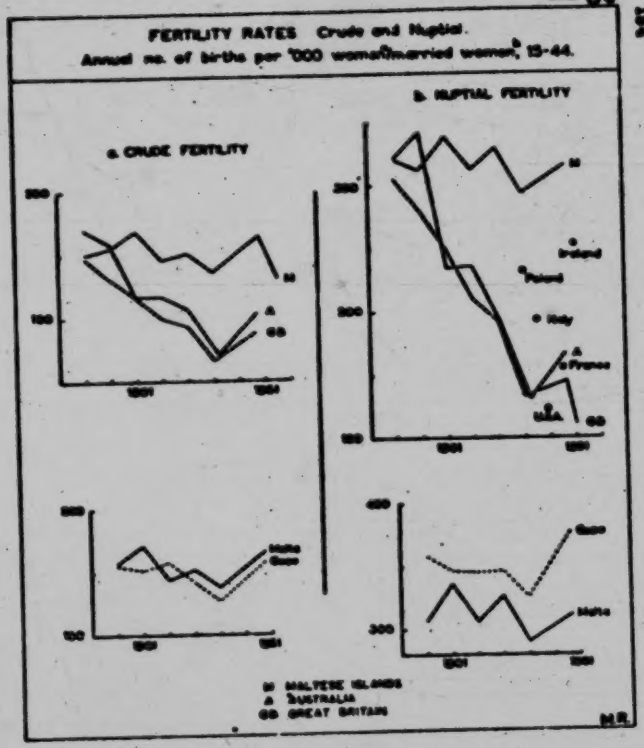

Fig. 57 Fertility Rates: Crude and Nuptial.

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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variety of diseases, among which smallpox and cholera were important, assumed epidemic proportions after several years in which sickness had been prevalent. In 1942, war casualties, malnutrition and disease were responsible for an excess of deaths over births.

CONJUGAL CONDITION (Fig. 56)

The proportions of single, married and widowed persons has remained virtually the same since 1901. The great disparity between the numbers of married men and married women resident in the Islands, a feature of the inter-war period, reduced the number of effective marriages, but the discrepancy was considerably reduced by 1948, when there were 97 married men to every 100 married women, as against 92 in 1921 and 1931.

Comparison with other countries indicates that a smaller proportion of the Maltese people marry than is the case in, for example, Britain, Ireland or Australia but the age of marriage in Malta is much lower than in most other countries. Nearly 80 per cent. of the men who marry do so before they are 30 and, in 1955, 90 per cent. of brides were below that age. (In England and Wales the comparative figures are 74 per cent. and 81 per cent.) Furthermore, 26.2 per cent. of Maltese brides are less than 20 years of age. In Gozo, marriages are fewer, proportionally, than in Malta, and take place later: although there is a higher proportion of brides below 20, the proportion of women married by the time they are 25 is similar in the two islands. The commonest age at which men are married is 25 in Gozo compared with 22 in Malta.

MARRIAGE AND FERTILITY

While the proportion of the population which is married is relatively low, the resulting depressing effect on fertility rates is more than neutralised by the early age at which women are married. Crude fertility rates alone form an insufficient basis for detailed demographic analysis. Changes in the sex ratio, in migration, and in marriage rates as well as the underlying socio-economic attitudes to family size all must be examined.

The marriage rate has declined since the early nineteenth century. In 1831-40 it was 8 per 1,000 of the total population, while in 1951-56 it was 6.4, having fallen below 7 in the 1850's and remaining below that level with the exception of the two post-war periods (Fig. 54). Annual variations have followed changes in economic conditions as was the case in the rising marriage rate soon after 1900. Plagues, epidemics and wars have generally been followed by a sharp rise, as was the case after World War II.

A high marriage rate, maintained for several years, is generally an indication of prosperity. This was so in the first five years of the present century, while the depression which culminated in the arrival of the Royal Commission in 1911 was accompanied by a fall to less than 5 per 1,000. The high marriage rate of the years immediately following the Second World War soon fell away, but since 1950 there has been an unexpected recovery which has not been matched by a comparable rise in the number of births.

It is possible to assess the fertility of the population by a comparison of the Censuses with Vital Statistics and by relating the number of births either to the number of women of childbearing age (crude fertility rate) or to the number of married women of childbearing age (nuptial fertility rate). Crude and nuptial fertilities are shown in Fig. 57 and in both cases comparisons made with British and Australian equivalents. It will be seen that, in the Maltese Islands, between 1881 and 1948 the crude fertility rate only fell below 130 once (in 1931) and generally fluctuated between 140 and 170. In 1948 it was 175, the second highest figure recorded, but by 1950 it had declined to 130 despite a slight increase in the marriage rate. This would seem to indicate that nuptial fertility is now on the decline, though this cannot be demonstrated statistically.

The comparison of nuptial fertility rates is more valid than that of crude rates since it makes allowances for differences in the marriage rates between various countries. By this type of assessment, the outstandingly high fertility of the Maltese population is even more strongly emphasised. Only once, in 1931,

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1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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has the nuptial fertility rate fallen below 300 and it is now 25 per cent. higher than that of Ireland, reputedly the highest in the world (22).

Fertility, marriage and birth-rates have been outlined above, but the trends of the first two do not account for decline of the last. Fertility is stable, or was until 1948, the marriage rate has not declined since that year and previous trends of nuptial fertility do not suggest any imminent decline. One strong possibility, however, is that the pattern of post-war migration is concealing a decline in the married population. Many migrants from the Islands return to get married and leave with their brides for their new homes. Their children are born overseas so that marriages which have been registered in the Islands give rise to children born and registered abroad. If this is so, it indicates that a decline in the rate of emigration would result in a rapid revival of the birth rate and that the present pattern of natural increase is very much affected by the trends of emigration.

MIGRATION

The pattern of nineteenth century migration has been the subject of close study by Price (23) who deals mainly with the period 1842-81 using as his major source of information, the records of the Passport Office. Since the Department of Emigration was not established until after the First World War, the intervening period has been filled in for this study by interpretation of further Passport records and of passenger movement statistics collected by the Customs and Port Department. From 1918 onwards statistics of the Emigration Department have been used along with those of the Customs and Port Department.

Comparability of material has been one of the biggest problems. In the period covered by Price, the native Maltese population only was considered; subsequent statistics are for the entire civil population, which from 1901 onwards included the families of the Garrison. The best check on the scale of movement is provided by a consideration of the Census reports together with vital statistics for inter-censal years. The difference between the net increase in population and the natural increase represents the inter-censal net migration.

Table 30. Inter-censal migration 1842-1956.

Period	Natural Increase	Net Increase	Net Migration
1842-51	11,310[1]	8,620	- 2,690
1851-61	17,470[2]	10,060	- 7,410
1861-71	7,860[3]	8,490	+ 630
1871-81	11,030[4]	8,180	- 2,850
1881-91	16,490	15,260	- 1,230
1891-1901	15,830	19,710	+ 3,880
1901-11	26,030	27,080	+ 1,050
1911-21	17,300	-110	-17,410
1921-31	25,380	28,260	+ 2,880
1931-48	65,140	64,370	- 770
1948-56[5]	53,480	10,250	-43,230

1-4. Price, op. cit.
5. Estimate from the Census of 1948 to 31st December, 1956.
1842-81. Maltese population only.
1881-1901. Civilian population excluding Garrison families.
1901-1956. Civilian population including Garrison families.

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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about quality and as yet incompletely dominated by ideas of welfare economics, the rural community is far less affected by change. While milk consumers in the towns are often either not completely convinced of the need for milk processing or at the other extreme will use only imported tinned milk where possible, the producers are generally even less convinced of the need for care in the production of clean milk. Unpasteurised goats' milk is still generally used in those farming households where milk is consumed at all, and understanding of the processes of infection is but slowly growing. Thus, in the field of public health and personal hygiene and medical care, social changes have been rapid, recent and uneven in incidence. Here, as in the economic sector, the mental acceptance of new ideas is not yet complete and is least advanced in the most rural and remote regions.

The examination already made of the demographic situation in the Maltese Islands needs some brief consideration against the background of social attitudes. The consensus of expert opinion is that in developing societies a falling birth rate is the result not of an actual decline in fertility but of family limitation. In most regions such a decline in family size is associated with changed social attitudes, which have become accepted in many countries in which Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion. Pope Pius XII himself condemned irresponsible parenthood and said it is 'a mistake and a departure from moral truth to exalt too highly the generative function even in its right moral setting of married life' (15).

The insularity and historical experience of Malta have preserved there a more rigid and strict application of Catholic rules of conduct, in which, despite the inadequacy of the Islands' resources to provide for the economic welfare of the population, the virtues of the large family are still stressed. Archbishop Gonzi in 1958 reminded an audience of young people that, although large families entailed much sacrifice on the part of the parents, parents should be prepared for a life of sacrifice (16). Father Vella, the founder of the Cana movement has said: 'One of Malta's glories is her large families' (17).

In Malta therefore the weight of the Church tends to discourage the secular social trend towards smaller families, and still makes illegal any provision for family limitation. Where secularism is strongest, in the urban cosmopolis, family size declines most rapidly. In the rural communities, where the precepts of the Church are most conscientiously observed and where the effect of secular socio-economic desires is most restricted, large families are normal and admired.

This regional contrast in social behaviour, when superimposed upon purely demographic variations in rates of population growth, becomes sometimes emphasised and sometimes negated. In the northern third of Malta, inward internal movement as a consequence of 'pioneer' agricultural settlement during and after the mid-nineteenth century produced a 'young' population, high birth rates and rates of natural increase. This region has remained almost entirely rural in social character. The second main region of inward movement of population, the suburban area, has experienced a recent decline in the early high birth rates as a result of the impact of secular ideas.

The urban heart of Malta in Valletta and Floriana by contrast, has been both traditionally a zone of outward movement of population and the district most affected by changes in social attitudes to family propagation. The remaining area, the heart and core of Maltese 'casal' life, illustrates clearly the delicate balance between demographic and religious and secular social influences. From this central area have traditionally gone the migrants to the new towns and the 'new' northern farming areas. The efflux has counteracted the traditionally rural and strongly religious tendency towards large families and a high rate of natural increase. On the southern fringe of this zone however lies the Żurrieq group of 'casals' and villages. From this until recently relatively isolated district, emigration has never been high and, with a survival of traditional rural values, this region has had in the 1950's the consistently highest birth rates - over 30 per 1,000 - of the *Maltese* population.